

FAIRBAIRNS
Notes on the Cathedrals
Peterborough



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PETERBOROUGH

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THE CATHEDRAL FROM THE S.E.

EACH one of our English cathedrals has its own particular charm. At Canterbury, Winchester, and St. Albans it is historic; at Peterborough it is mainly architectural. Sir Gilbert Scott wrote that after Durham, Peterborough was the finest Norman interior that we have. After Durham certainly in grandeur, but surpassing the northern cathedral in at least one point, the Norman east end, a feature that we find in only one other cathedral—Norwich. But if Durham be grander in its Norman work, Peterborough stands unrivalled in its west front—the very finest in Europe: and probably the most beautiful object of all architectural art in England. If this be granted, and if we can also accept Froude's dictum that "The Gothic cathedral is, perhaps, on the whole, the most magnificent creation which the mind of man has as yet thrown out" then this front is indeed precious.

But the interest of our cathedral is by no means exhausted by its architectural story. The church as we see it to-day is the third that has been built on the same spot. In 655 a monastery was founded at Peterborough. It was the first monastery, and one of the very earliest seats of Christianity, in central England. The Danes destroyed it in 870, and for a hundred years there was desolation. Then



in 970 the monastery and church were rebuilt by Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, with the help of King Edgar. Again came the Danes, but this time merely to hold the monastery at tribute. However, the church was not to be spared, for in 1116 it was accidentally, but entirely, destroyed by fire. The Norman work that we now see was then begun, and on another page the subsequent building story is told.

Peterborough was originally Medeshamstede—the homestead in the meadows. Then it was Gildenburg, or Golden Borough, either from its great wealth, or from the fact that Abbot Leofric gilded some of the monastery roofs. Last of all we get Peter's Borough. At the zenith of its glory the monastery was one of the richest and most renowned. Pilgrims unable to visit Rome came here and were granted equal indulgencies. Here the modern pilgrim recalls the name of Hereward the Wake—Hereward as drawn by Charles Kingsley. Catherine of Arragon, the ill-fated consort of Henry VIII. is buried here. As a monument to her the king spared the church—"one of the goodliest monuments of Christendom"—at the Dissolution of the Monasteries. Mary Queen of Scots was also buried here, but her son James I. subsequently removed her body to Westminster Abbey. At Peterborough the "great commission for draining the fens was opened." During the Civil War the Parliamentary troops occupied the cathedral, doing irreparable damage to the building, and increasing its historic interest! In modern times the position was reversed when Parliament came under the spell of Peterborough's bishop, Dr. Magee.



DIMENSIONS OF CATHEDRAL.

Interior length 426 feet; height 78 feet. Length of nave 228 feet. Breadth of nave and aisles 79 feet.

BUILDING DATES.

970. Church and monastery built by Bishop Ethelwold of Winchester; part of foundations still to be seen.
1116. All the buildings burnt.
1117. Rebuilding begun by John of Sais.
1143. Choir completed; transept 1150. c.; nave 1190. c.
1200.c. Western transept.
1235.c. West Front completed.
1250.c. Bell tower carried up; rebuilt 1325.
1290.c. Lady Chapel completed, begun 1272, destroyed 1651.
1325.c. Central tower rebuilt.
S.W. spire.
1375.c. Galilee porch.
1438.c. The New Buildings begun, completed 1500. c.
1770. Church repaved; altar screen, and organ screen erected—since removed.
1800. Turrets added to central tower, and octagon taken down.
1827. Restorations under Blore.
1845. Sir Gilbert Scott's work begun.
1883. Central tower taken down, and rebuilding begun; completed 1886.
1894. Completion of modern embellishments.
1896. Rebuilding of part of West Front.



FEATURES TO BE NOTICED.

- Remarkable general harmony of the building.
The Norman roof of nave.
Variation between the east and west sides of transepts.
Norman apse, a rare feature, and the best in the country; to be compared with Norwich, slightly earlier.
Bad building throughout; considerable underpinning.
The West Front; the most beautiful in the world; specially note clever construction of central gable to preserve uniform angle with the other two.
Change of plan at West end—two bays added to nave, then western transept, later, the present portico.
The "new building" very fine example of Perpendicular.

MONUMENTS.

In addition to those mentioned under "Historical Notes" there are monuments, or memorials of Catherine of Arragon (subscribed for by the Kates of England); Mary Queen of Scots; Sir Humphrey Orme (1670), erected by himself, but mutilated before his death; Thomas Deacon (1721) a benefactor of the city; John Benson (1827) "the oldest Committee Clerk at the House of Commons"; Richard Scarlett (1894) sexton, age 98, quaint inscription. There are many slabs, and effigies of Saxon and Norman times, among them the "Monks' Stone," of interesting, but doubtful tradition. The Benedictine memorials are considered the best in England.



THE SOUTH PORCH.



THE WEST TRANSEPT.



THE NAVE.



THE CHOIR.



THE NEW BUILDING.



THE REREDOS.



THE BISHOP'S THRONE.



THE CATHEDRAL AND BISHOP'S PALACE

HISTORICAL NOTES.

Abbots' and Bishops' names are in heavy letter. Monuments are noted*.
A.D.

43-410. ROMAN OCCUPATION OF BRITAIN.

First introduction of Christianity.

449. ENGLISH LAND IN BRITAIN.

597. Augustine lands in Kent.

626. Penda King of Mercia, slain in battle 655.

655. Conversion of Mercia to Christianity.

Monastery of Peterborough founded.

656. **Saxulf**: first Abbot.

787. DANES FIRST LAND IN ENGLAND.

870. Danes destroy monastery of Peterborough, killing Abbot Hedda.

871. Alfred the Great king.

972. Monastery rebuilt.

Aldulf: first abbot of new establishment; under his rule the abbey acquired the name of the Golden Borough.

1006. **Elsinus**: a great collector of relics.

1057. **Leofric**: nephew of Leofric, Earl of Coventry; with the English army at Norman invasion; Hereward's Mass Priest.

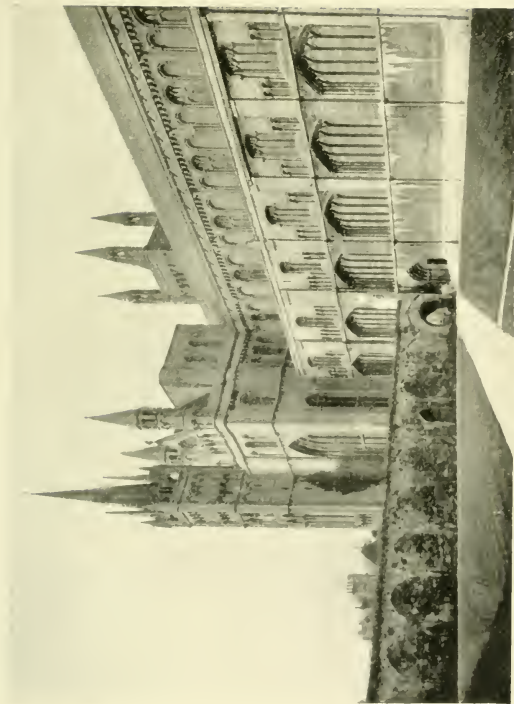
1066. **NORMAN CONQUEST OF ENGLAND.**
Brando: uncle of Hereward the Wake whom he knighted.
"A noble elder: more fit, from his eye and gait, to be a knight than a monk." C. Kingsley—"Hereward."
1069. **Tuold**: under his rule the monastery was despoiled by Hereward.
1099. **Godric**: another uncle of Hereward.
1103. **Matthias**: brother of Geoffrey the Chief Justice who was drowned at foundering of The White Ship.
1107. **Ernulph**: previously Prior of Canterbury.
- *1114. **John of Sais**: the first builder of the existing church.
- *1133. **Martin de Vecti**: a great builder, and benefactor to abbey and church.
1155. **William of Waterville**: built parts of transepts, nave, and central tower.
1177. **Benedict**: was Prior of Canterbury; wrote a work on Becket, and brought to Peterborough relics of the Saint; built greater part of nave.
- *1193. **Andrew**: like other abbots, made acquisitions of lands for the monastery.
1201. **Acharius**: came from St. Albans, possibly bringing with him the suggestion for design of West Front.
1214. **Robert of Lindsey**: attended the fourth Lateran Council; fought for Henry III. at Rockingham.
1233. **Walter of St. Edmunds**: a great builder; under his rule was held in 1238 an impressive dedicatory service for the completed building.
1262. **Robert of Sutton**: fought against King Henry III.
1396. **William Genge**: the first mitred abbot.
1474. **CAXTON SETTLES IN ENGLAND.**
1496. **Robert Kirton**: great builder; completed the New Buildings.
1525. **TYNDALE TRANSLATES THE NEW TEST.**
- *1528. **John Chambers**: the last abbot; Wolsey visited him with great ceremony; Catherine of Arragon was buried in the church during his rule.
1536. Queen Catherine of Arragon buried in the Cathedral.
1539. **SUPPRESSION OF THE GREATER ABBEYS** including Peterborough, one the richest.
1541. Consecration of **John Chambers** as first bishop.
1587. Mary Queen of Scots beheaded.
1613. *Shakespeare's Henry VIII. written.*

1638. **John Towers**: one of twelve bishops who protested at their exclusion from the House of Lords, and who were imprisoned in the Tower.
1685. **Thomas White**: one of the "Seven Bishops"; a Nonjuror; deprived 1691.
- *1718. **White Kennett**: a distinguished author whose MSS. are in the British Museum; he made many political enemies, a picture (now at St. Albans) represents him as Judas.
1738. THE METHODISTS APPEAR.

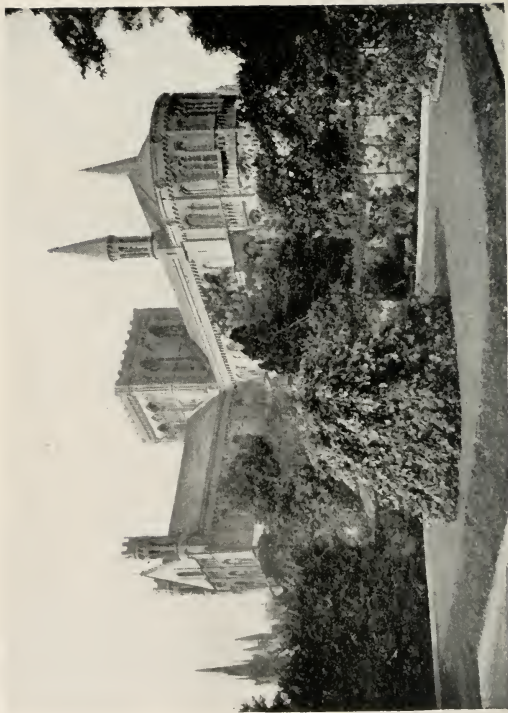


THE MONKS' STONE.

- *1769. **John Hinchcliffe**: son of a stable-master; educated at Westminster School, and Trinity College, Cambridge; Head Master of Westminster, Chaplain to the King, Master of Trinity.
- *1794. **Stephen Madan**: cousin of the poet Cowper.
1813. **John Parsons**: was Master of Balliol.
- *1819. **Herbert Marsh**: the last bishop interred in the Cathedral.
- *1839. **George Davys**: was Queen Victoria's tutor.
- *1864. **Francis Jeune**: father of Sir Francis Jeune.
1866. *Kingsley's "Hereward the Wake" published.*
- *1868. **William Connor Magee**: was Dean of Cork; in 1891 Archbishop of York but died within a few months.
1891. **Mandell Creighton**: to London 1896.
1897. **Hon. Edward Carr Glynn**.



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